

Compilation of Feedback from Community Break-Out Groups

Reston Town Center North Community Workshop

Reston Master Plan Special Study

Saturday, May 22, 2010

Langston Hughes Middle School
11401 Ridge Heights Road
Reston, VA 20191-1309

Reston Master Plan Special Study Reston Town Center North Area Community Meeting

Compilation of Feedback from Small Group Discussions

I. Introduction

On Saturday May 22, 2010, the Department of Planning and Zoning hosted a community meeting at Langston Hughes Middle School. The purpose was to gather citizen comments regarding the Reston Town Center North area of the Reston Master Plan Special Study.

Approximately 41 people attended, including 14 members of the Reston Master Plan Special Study Task Force, and offered a range of opinions about the opportunities and limitations that exist in this area for achieving transit-oriented development.

As a part of the meeting, attendees were randomly divided into four smaller groups. Section II of this compilation contains a summary of all 4 sets of vision statements, top 3 opportunities and top 3 issues of greatest concern recorded during the small group discussions. Section III contains the entire comments recorded for each small group.

II. Summary

Vision Statements

- Environmentally excellent area that is an extension of the Town Center uses with a prominent urban/municipal focus that is well connected.
- Create a transitional, semi-urban, barrier-free neighborhood with a strong civic orientation, ample open space that supports but does not extend the character of the Town Center urban-core area.
- A green, artsy urban village that has great streetscapes linking to the Town Center.
- North Reston Town Center should be a community-oriented, mixed-use and urban area with less density than the Urban Core and a focus on community-oriented public services with a community hall, an expanded police station and Fairfax County facilities.

Top Opportunities

- Medical office buildings and the large central civic space could include a library, recreation center, or an urban school
- Land consolidation is easier because area has only 2 primary land owners
- Mix of housing with a focus on senior housing. Hospital can be a draw for senior and transitional living
- Connections should be north-south to the Town Center and Metro station
- Bus circulator system

- Diversify the retail in the area, have unique retail without chain stores
- Focus on the environment with open space, environmentally sensitive development, urban parks, and streetscaping
- Create green buildings or a green neighborhood with more park space than Town Center
- Better pedestrian and bicycle connections
- Variety of building types and architectural designs
- Better link from this area to Lake Anne, take advantage of the proximity to Lake Anne

Top Issues of Concern

- Existing fuel depot
- New Dominion Parkway and Reston Parkway are barriers to pedestrian and bicycle access
- Allow the police station to remain but require a more urban form for the facility
- Suburban pattern of existing development needs to be overcome
- Balancing development of retail in the Town Center and north Town Center area to keep them self-sufficient without adversely affecting the Village Centers
- Need a connection to the Town Center, the Metro station, and surrounding areas
- Avoid high-rise canyons that block light and views Pedestrian and vehicular conflicts are present, focus on parking design and placement
- Maintain and infuse a sense of community, avoid losing retail, services, and activities
- Ensure adequate public transportation circulation, the area will not survive without a link to the Metro station
- Preserve all of the services in the area, including the homeless shelter

III. Comments by Group

Break-Out Group – Blue

Facilitator: Heidi Merkel (DPZ staff)

Group Reporter: Art Murphy (Task Force)

Note-taker: Aaron Klibaner (DPZ staff)

Vision

Create a transitional, semi-urban, barrier-free neighborhood with a strong civic orientation, ample open space that supports but does not extend the character of the Town Center urban-core area.

Top Opportunities

1. Neighborhood with a mixed demographic but focused on seniors.
2. A neighborhood with a mix of civic uses broadly defined to include:
 - A library;
 - Recreation Center;
 - School;
 - Open Space.
3. Create a grid of streets that enhances connectivity within the neighborhood and that takes advantage of the proximity of the neighborhood to Lake Anne and the Town Center urban-core area.

Issues of Greatest Concern

1. Any future redevelopment should avoid creating negative impacts for the Lake Anne area.
2. Insure adequate public transit which could include a circulator bus system that enhances connectivity within the Town Center North area.
3. The homeless shelter provides a valuable community service that should be preserved.
4. Additional pedestrian crossings over New Dominion Drive should be created.

Feedback from Small Group Discussion

Opportunities

- Opportunity to incorporate wider mix of land uses, including more residential uses;
- Opportunity to encourage new buildings to take more of an urban - vertical form, although not as urban as found in urban-core Town Center area;
- Encourage big box retailers in area to redevelop in a more vertical, urban form;
- Opportunity to create a grid of streets to enhance pedestrian connectivity in Town Center North area;
- Opportunity to create a way-finding signage system to highlight pedestrian routes within the Town Center North area and that would also highlight connections to

adjacent areas of Reston such as Lake Anne and the Town Center urban-core area;

- Consideration should be given to locating some of the future expansions of the Northern Virginia Community College facilities within the Town Center North area;
- Consideration should be given to redesigning some intersections within the Town Center North area to include “Barn Dance” pedestrian crossings, i.e.- simultaneous multi-directional pedestrian crossings;
- Consideration should be given to leasing “air rights” in the Town Center North area to accommodate taller buildings;
- Consideration should be given to suggesting that the police station relocate from the Town Center North area to a location outside of this area and to possibly co-locating with the Herndon Fire Department, which will be vacating its current location soon;
- The current mix of civic and institutional uses could serve as an attraction for healthcare professionals to move to the Town Center North area;
- Consideration should be given to co-locating several civic and institutional uses within the same building in a more vertical, urban form in order to create more room in the Town Center North area for additional open space;
- The Town Center North area would be a good location for a “civic center” for the Reston area with performance arts facilities;
- Opportunity to locate more senior housing in the Town Center North area, and of different types (especially “active-adult” over 55 housing) due to proximity of hospital, and assisted living facilities;
- Opportunity to create a central green running north-south through the Town Center North area that includes sites for recreation centers and a site for a new school, which would be an “urban school”.

Concerns

- The Town Center North area should include greater pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular connectivity than what exists today, and should also include better connectivity to other areas of Reston;
- Need for facilities with public meeting rooms;
- Need for greater mix of land uses and more open space in Town Center North area than what exists today;
- The homeless shelter provides an important community service that should be preserved when the Town Center North area is redeveloped;
- Greater public awareness of the proximity of the Town Center North area to other nearby areas such as Lake Anne and the Town Center urban-core area should be encouraged;
- There is a need for new development to incorporate low impact design features and to develop ways in which the existing stormwater management detention pond can be upgraded and integrated into future redesign of the area;
- There is a need to incentivize landowners in the Town Center North area to utilize more mixed-use, urban style development designs when redeveloping their properties in the future;

- New residential development should be more evenly distributed throughout the Town Center North area than it is within the Town Center urban-core area;
- A site for a grocery store should be identified as part of future redevelopment plans for the Town Center North area;
- There is a need for more aggressive environmental requirements for new development in the area than what exists today;
- The current high traffic volumes on New Dominion Drive inhibit pedestrian travel between the Town Center North area and the Town Center urban-core area;
- There is a need for more and safer pedestrian crossing points along New Dominion Drive for persons wishing to walk to the Town Center urban-core area and to access the future Metro Station;
- There should be greater accessibility/connectivity for persons with physical disabilities within the Town Center North area;
- There is a need for more temporary housing for health professionals at the hospital and other healthcare facilities so that employees who live outside of Reston do not have to commute to work from long distances;
- There is a need for another Civic Center to serve performing arts and other cultural activities within the greater Reston area;
- There is a need for more bus transit stops within the Town Center North area and that are designed with pullouts and other features that make them safer for transit users;
- There is a need for a greater range of senior housing options within the Town Center North area including “active adult, over 55” options;
- There will be a need for more recreation/health centers to serve the active adult senior population;
- There is a need for a new school in the Town Center North area;
- There is a steep grade change between the Spectrum property and the Library site that is dangerous for pedestrians and needs to be addressed;
- The area currently lacks an identity.

Break-Out Group - Red

Facilitator: Faheem Darab (DPZ staff)

Group Reporter: Terri Phillips (Task Force)

Note-taker: Leanna O'Donnell (DPZ staff)

Vision

Environmentally excellent area that is an extension of the Town Center uses with a prominent urban/municipal focus that is well connected.

Top Opportunities

4. Uses
 - a. Two owners – provides an amazing opportunity to create a cohesive/comprehensive plan for the area
 - b. Community use and meeting rooms are needed
 - c. Medical and Civic uses should remain
 - d. Urban school
5. Connections
 - a. North – South connections to the Town Center, Metro Station and surrounding areas
 - b. Circulator system – to provide access to the Town Center and Metro Station
6. Environmental
 - a. Opportunity to provide green development and be environmentally sensitive
 - b. Urban Parks and open space
 - c. Stormwater management pond could become more of an amenity
 - d. Green buildings and Green neighborhood certification (LEED)
 - e. Park ownership – opportunity to swap land

Issues of Greatest Concern

1. Police Station
 - Fueling station should be removed if the station is moved
 - Police station should remain here but should have a more urban form
2. Suburban Pattern of Development
 - Police and library should become more urban
3. Need a connection to the Town Center, Metro station and surrounding areas
 - Internal and external connections should be improved

Feedback from Small Group Discussion

Vision

- Extension of Town Center
- Transition the density (less intense) for this area than the Town Center
- This is a town center within the Town Center
- Emphasize a town green idea
- Combination of Government and Institutional uses - can be complementary and an appropriate transition from the Town Center

- Buildings should have a vertical mix of uses (perhaps a government function above retail, and also private office in one building)
- Transition the density (noted 3 times by participants) down from the Town Center
- Municipal/civic focus – highly connected to the Town Center and to the Metro and surrounding area
- Model LEED Neighborhood
- Environmentally sensitive/excellent area
- Connections to Town Center and Metro

Concerns

- New Dominion Parkway is a challenge (noted 3 times by participants)
- Police Station – don't preclude opportunities for the larger area
- Library, homeless shelter, Sunrise assisted living, County services are all very important to the community – don't want to lose these services, it costs money for them to relocate
- The area is dependent on the car (even within the site); suburban pattern of development
- Lack of street connections
- Be wary of too much green space – should be urban green space
- Spectrum development – big box stores will disappear – people will have to leave to shop, which is a concern
- Spectrum should redevelop with big box that have an urban form (vertical) so workers don't leave
- Spectrum seems isolated – should improve flow from Spectrum to this site

Opportunities

- Open space/green space – FCPA already owns the property (noted by 2 participants)
- North/South connections for bikes and pedestrians – need safe movement towards the Metro (use Fountain as the connection)
- North/South connection to the Metro Station, not only to the Town Center
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- Pocket Parks throughout, especially from north to south
- Urban parks are more appropriate here versus woodlands
- Urban parks – should balance with the need for space for other uses
- One building with multiple civic uses – library, supervisor office, public health, etc.
- Maintain existing uses but with a more urban form
- Civic uses
- Circulator bus system for the area and the Town Center and Metro – design of a grid should keep a bus system in mind
- Two owners – opportunity to comprehensively plans the site and have land exchanges
- New Dominion is both a challenge and an opportunity – need activity along the north side to draw people north

- Access to transit station – opportunity for people movers
- Cultural uses
- Name of the station - Reston Center instead of Reston Parkway
- Affordable Housing is needed
- Expand the Government Center to have a facility for the entire western part of the County
- Health and Human Services uses
- Urban school
- Linkages to the Town Center, Metro, and surrounding areas
- LEED Neighborhood certification – could be a model
- There is a need for conference and meeting rooms in the municipal center
- INOVA should add more medical office to compete with Reston Hospital
- There is a need for both bike trails and bike lanes – some bike users will only use a trail, some only the road, some both
- Daycare center
- Senior day care
- Stormwater management pond could become more of an amenity
- Improve the area opposite Spectrum – perhaps swap the Park property with the library property
- Improve connections

Break Our Group - Green

Facilitator: Sandi Smith (DPZ staff)

Group Reporter: Paul Thomas (Task Force)

Note-taker: Anita Capps (DPZ staff)

Vision

North Reston Town Center should be a community-oriented, mixed-use and urban area with less density than the Urban Core and a focus on community-oriented public services with a community hall, an expanded police station and Fairfax County facilities.

Top Opportunities

1. Additional connections and expanded green space
2. Provide a community hall, consolidate and enhance the County and civic uses
3. Diversify the retail in the area, have unique retail without chain stores

Issues of Greatest Concern

1. Remove the existing fuel depot
2. Balancing development of retail in the Town Center and north Town Center area to keep them self-sufficient without adversely affecting the Village Centers
3. Need a connection to the Town Center, the Metro Station, and surrounding areas

Feedback from Small Group Discussion

- Consideration should be given to locating some of the future expansions of the Northern Virginia Community College facilities within the Town Center North area
- Global Destination – New Town USA
- Need more unique retail not cookie cutter
- Arts Festival that supports diversity
- Expanded Theater Offerings
- Georgetown/Old Town Mix of Businesses
- Preserve County Land for Open Space as well as school use due to increased intensity/density
- Concern for congestion therefore relocate library outside Town Center in a less intense setting
- Need more Senior friendly housing, pedestrian access improvements, tie into the hospital
- Music Venues, Arts and Cultural events
- Environment that relates to a broad range of ages. Provide residential types so that Seniors that live in Reston now can move to more Senior-friendly residences within Reston
- Use park owned property for swap with other land for green space and develop site in relation to other uses (land with stand of trees not seen as in the right location to integrate with planned mixed uses)
- Establish grid of street, performing arts venue

- Provide a green of grass and trees on north-south access in Center North Area (ie. Reston Central Park)
- Extend the Town Center along access into the Center North Area, keep Library
- Performance space
- School with unique features/program
- Adapt uses to different ages
- Provide transit with Town Center for interior circulation and Metro station
- Some uses (grocery store) need parking. Mix Use with structured parking.
- Covered pedestrian “ways” between uses and parking, roof parking, goods delivery system and support pedestrian use
- Dispersed public space, library out of place, less high rise canyon, better traffic grid, linear park not Central Park, balance Town center shopping center and community serving retail of village centers (do not undermine the economies of either).
- Rail station should have highest density with residential mix, the urban core should have most of the retail space, the Central North area should have an urban mix as a local Reston area destination, support linear park, Center for Community Services – Library, Police Station, Hunter Mill Supervisor’s office. Reston Community hall – All Reston under one center, auditorium space
- Rail station – Performing arts, focus of economic high intensity and residential high density
- Grid ok, regular retail in core, retail in Center North should be less intense, leave library in this area, some local retail services
- Linear Park (connects to Metro) in natural form with different open spaces uses and Civic Center within a Community Green, Police station (fortress design)/ fueling station together, Grid base, swap park land if linear park occurs, if not use park land for open space
- Local transit linkage along north south axis through Town Center, Town Center parking along New Dominion Parkway and the existing library form a barrier to access to Center North, use auxiliary parking for events
- Locate residential along Fountain Drive, taking advantage of the higher elevation, residential building design should take advantage of view to the linear park and the west. Integrate Community Center w/Linear Park and other public/civic uses.

Break Out Group - Yellow

Facilitator: Richard Lambert (DPZ staff)

Group Reporter: Mary Ellen Craig

Note-taker: Jennifer Lai

Vision

A green, artsy urban village that has great streetscapes linking to the Town Center.

Top Opportunities

7. Greening the area - A central park concept, pocket parks, streetscaping
8. Pedestrian friendly – Connectivity of pedestrians and bicyclists to this area
9. Variety of building types and good architectural design

Issues of Greatest Concern

1. High-rise canyons blocking light and views, no green space
2. Pedestrian and vehicular conflicts – poor parking design, placement, management
3. Losing a sense of community including activities, retail uses, and services

Feedback from Small Group Discussion

Environment

- Concern about terrain and slopes (FCPA property)
- Challenging topography - contains hills and flat surfaces

Green space

- Make it greener, pocket parks
- Like central park theme
- Include narrower green space running east-west

Recreation

- Active recreation uses
- Create a “playground” for seniors – includes activities and exercises designed specifically for elderly individuals
- Add basketball court
- Address various needs for different demographic groups, for example dog parks and skate parks

Access and Circulation

- Pedestrian and bike friendly
- Bike rentals to encourage use of bikes
- Handicap/ADA accessible
- Reasonable street system and all modes of transportation addressed
- Shuttle/circulator from Town Center (TC) area
- Complete streets – accommodate all modes of transportation and appropriate mix of modes

- Pedestrian road crossings – if bridges and underpasses are proposed, they must be safe and not inconvenience the users
- Redesign streets by making them narrower and more attractive

Arts, Civic space, Amenities

- IPAR (Initiative for Public Art Reston) involvement
- More emphasis on interactive artwork, like Lake Anne
- Update the library – make it a center for interactive pieces of knowledge, provide more than just books
- Arts district – offer density bonus for including arts space
- Add a new community center
- Water features

Housing

- No canyons of high-rises, don't block views and light
- Creative design for high-rises
- Maintain senior housing

Relation to Town Center

- Connectivity to the TC
- Logical extension of TC
- Transitional zone from TC – gradation of density (tapering) further away from TC
- Transitions from the TC –redevelop parking garages

Vision

- Create a village community
- Future character- maintain the greenness (ex: Society Hill in Philadelphia)
- Residential/urban village – (ex: Market Street in San Francisco)
- Mix of taller buildings with townhouses/low rise buildings

Other Comments and Questions

- Garage to the south could be an eyesore
- Big box stores on right side of study area (Spectrum property?) -Work with the owners to be flexible in the design, the corridor will be lopsided because there is only residential use on the other side of the big box retailers
- TC not desirable for the 30-and-under singles demographic
- Will there be a need for an urban-type school in this area (within land unit D-1)?